



NEWS RELEASE

GOVERNOR'S COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

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GOVERNOR BREDESEN'S COVERKIDS PROGRAM GETS FEDERAL APPROVAL

Nashville - Governor Phil Bredesen today announced the state has received federal approval for CoverKids, a comprehensive health insurance plan for uninsured children in Tennessee. CoverKids is a key part of Bredesen's Cover Tennessee initiative, an innovative group of programs targeting Tennesseans who do not have access to health care insurance. In September 2006, the state submitted its plan for CoverKids to the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS).

"Our goal is to help Tennessee's children access medical care as easily as they can check out a library book," Bredesen said. "Most importantly, CoverKids will allow us to go beyond simply treating children's illnesses and do something about preventing disease in the first place."

CoverKids will be available to children under 19 years of age who are in families with incomes under 250 percent of the federal poverty level, or about \$50,000 for a family of four. Families with incomes above that level will be able to purchase insurance through the program. CoverKids benefits include preventive care, such as well-baby and well-child exams and age appropriate immunizations, with no co-payments.

Tennessee has allocated \$63 million over three years to fund the program, with a three-to-one federal spending match. CoverKids is part of the federal SCHIP, or State Children's Health Insurance Program.

"We've continued with program development for CoverKids during our approval process so we could implement the program as quickly as possible once federal approval was received," Finance and Administration Commissioner Dave Goetz said. "We'll meet our goal of having this program ready to enroll kids by the end of the first quarter of the year."

"As many as 127,000 children in Tennessee have no health care insurance, and we'll be giving many of them their first opportunity to have a 'medical home,'" said Dr. Andrea Willis, Director of CoverKids. "That means a relationship with a primary care provider and access to scheduled preventive healthcare."

CoverKids insurance will be provided by BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee and Policy Studies, Inc. (PSI) has been awarded the contract for eligibility and enrollment.

Cover Tennessee also includes CoverTN, providing basic health insurance for uninsured working Tennesseans and AccessTN, comprehensive insurance for seriously ill adults turned away by private insurers. In addition, Cover Tennessee includes a series of initiatives targeting the growing prevalence of diabetes through Project Diabetes and improved lifestyle choices through GetFitTN. The General Assembly overwhelmingly approved the Cover Tennessee programs last year.

More information on all Cover Tennessee programs is available at www.CoverTN.gov or by calling 1-866-COVERTN.

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